

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An intrinsically stable shirred tubular single-layer or multilayer food casing consisting essentially of synthetic polymers, said polymers comprising (i) aliphatic polyamides and copolyamides, polyether block amides, polyurethanes, copolyesters, biodegradable polyesters, and mixtures thereof, and (ii) water-soluble polymer, and

said food casing having, without separate support, sufficient intrinsic stability to be processed on fully automatic stuffing machines,

wherein said shirred food casing bends under the effect of its own weight by no more than 20 %, based on the length between two support points and at room temperature, said food casing further exhibits a water vapor permeability of 20 to 1000 g/m² d determined as specified in DIN 53 122 at 23 °C, and said food casing is compressed in a ratio of 100:1 or more,

and the food casing water vapor permeability is essentially determined by the synthetic polymers.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) An intrinsically stable shirred tubular single-layer or multilayer food casing consisting essentially of synthetic polymers and having a sufficient intrinsic stability to be processed on fully automatic stuffing machines, wherein said shirred food casing has a sigma-5 value (longitudinal/transverse, measured wet) of less than 20/20 N/mm².

4. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein, after shirring, said casing extends in the longitudinal direction by no more than 15 % when stored on a smooth planar support at room temperature and 60 % rh.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing is single-layered.

7. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing has a wall thickness of no more than 90 μm .

8. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing contains soft synthetic polymers or polymer mixtures.

9. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing is plasticized by at least one monomeric plasticizer.

10. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing has a nominal caliber of no more than 40 mm.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the casing is corona-treated on the outside.

13. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing is closed at one end.

14. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the casing is permeable to cold smoke, warm smoke, or hot smoke.

15. (Currently Amended) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing achieves the required intrinsic stability by a temporary setting of the shirring geometry and the resultant breakdown in tension of the shirred pleats,

the intrinsic stability is promoted by an adhesion-promoting treatment or impregnation consisting of one or more of oil or water,

and said food casing has optionally been corona-treated.

16. (Previously Presented) Method of making sausage encased in a shirred food casing as claimed in Claim 1 comprising filling said shirred food casing with sausage emulsion on a fully automatic stuffing apparatus.

17. (Previously Presented) An encased sausage comprising a shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1.

18. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing extends in the longitudinal direction by no more than 10 % when stored on a smooth planar support at room temperature and 60 % rh after shirring.

19. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing bends under the effect of its own weight by no more than 5 %, based on the length between two support points, at room temperature.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously Presented) The shirred food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said shirred food casing comprises plasticizer selected from dimethylsulfoxide, butane-1,3-diol, glycerol, water, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, butylene glycol, diglyceride, diglycol ether, formamide, N-methylformamide, N,N-dimethylformamide, N,N-dimethylurea, N,N-dimethylacetamide, polyalkylene oxide, glycerol mono-, di- or triacetate, sorbitol, erythritol, mannitol, gluconic acid, galacturonic acid, glucaric acid, glucuronic acid, polyhydroxycarboxylic

acids, glucose, fructose, sucrose, citric acid, a citric acid derivative, or mixtures thereof.

22. (Previously Presented) An intrinsically stable shirred tubular single-layer or multilayer food casing consisting essentially of synthetic polymers and having sufficient intrinsic stability to be processed on fully automatic stuffing machines, wherein said shirred casing further comprises at least one of (i) an outer coating of oil or water and (ii) an outer surface tension of 40 to 50 mN/m imparted by corona treatment and said shirred casing extends in the longitudinal direction by no more than 10% when it is stored on a smooth, planar support, without packaging, at room temperature and 60 % relative humidity.

23. (Currently Amended) An intrinsically stable shirred tubular single-layer or multilayer food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the synthetic polymers consist of a mixture of a single copolyamide; polyether block amide; and ~~further comprise~~ a water-soluble polymer selected from polyvinylpyrrolidone or partially or completely saponified polyvinylacetate.